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3-2015

# A Political History of Spanish: The Making of a Language, edited by José Del Valle (review)

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### Recommended Citation

Sanz-Sánchez, I. (2015). A Political History of Spanish: The Making of a Language, edited by José Del Valle (review). *Hispania: A Journal Devoted to the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese*, 98(1), 175-177. Retrieved from [http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/langcult\\_facpub/6](http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/langcult_facpub/6)

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En el capítulo 8, Polit Dueñas examina la novela de Héctor Abad Faciolince *Angosta*. Ella muestra que dicho texto, aunque no sigue los códigos de la *sicaresca*, describe una ciudad en estado de terror donde los actores ahora son los paramilitares. El capítulo 9 culmina con un acercamiento al trabajo del fotógrafo Juan Fernando Ospina, el cual, mediante su producción artística, reta esos conceptos que constituyen una visión estereotipada de la violencia generada por el narcotráfico.

Polit Dueñas concluye que el análisis crítico de la narconarrativa generada en base a Medellín y Culiacán es producto de situaciones exclusivas. La experiencia particular que la crítica atribuye a cada región ha de sustentar no solo los diferentes códigos y formas que integran la producción literaria y artística, sino también aquello que implica su concepción y lectura. El trabajo de estos autores y artistas debe verse como la perspectiva tácita del sujeto y de la víctima en su intento de análisis y de signar su trabajo como un acto de resistencia que trasciende la dinámica de este fenómeno. En resumen, este es un riguroso trabajo de investigación que, aunque marca sólidas pautas a seguir, también subraya la necesidad de reconocer que la codificación y clasificación del tema del narco puede resultar en aproximaciones básicas y reduccionistas de una situación compleja.

**Gabriela Miranda-Recinos**

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## Linguistics, Language, and Media

**Del Valle, José, ed.** *A Political History of Spanish: The Making of a Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. Pp. 430. ISBN 978-1-107-00573-0.

Students in the field of Hispanic linguistics are used to thinking about the history of Spanish exclusively or primarily in grammatical terms. By contrast, the 25 contributions included in this volume edited by José del Valle define their object metalinguistically rather than linguistically. In the words of the editor, “Spanish is approached as a discursively constructed political artifact that, as such, contains traces of the society in which it is produced and of the discursive traditions that are involved . . . in its creation,” as well as endowed with a “performative function in the field in which it is produced” (18). As acknowledged by Del Valle, the volume owes much of its internal structure, chapter topic choices and even language (i.e., English) to the very underlying expectations about the cultural and geopolitical place of Spanish that are the object of this project (19).

*A Political History of Spanish: The Making of a Language* starts with a lucid review by Del Valle (part 1, chapter 1) of the history of linguistics as a discipline and the concept of “cultural linguistics” as the study of the ideological constructs on language(s) from a critical perspective. After that, the volume is divided into four main sections, all of which focus on the idea of “the making of Spanish” in different geographical contexts: *Iberian perspectives* (part 2), *Latin American and Transatlantic perspectives* (part 3), *US perspectives* (part 4) and *Beyond Spain and the Americas* (part 5).

Part 2 includes an introduction by Medina, del Valle and Monteagudo, followed by a selection of papers on a variety of linguistic constructions in Spain; Wright focuses on the emergence of the perception of Romance as distinct from Latin in the Middle Ages; Martínez analyzes the construction of Spanish as a national and imperial language in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Woolard provides a sociopolitical reading of the metalinguistic controversy between Bernardo de Alderete and Gregorio López Madera against the background of the Morisco issue in the seventeenth century; Medina explains the foundation of the Real Academia Española (RAE) as an example of the institutionalization of cultural practices brought about by Bourbon absolutism in the early eighteenth century; Villa treats the intimate alliance between the RAE and the central government in the 1840s and 1850s against alternative sources of linguistic

authority; and Monteagudo focuses on the linguistic debates about the role of Spanish vs. other languages in the Second Spanish Republic.

Part 3 opens with an introduction by Narvaja de Arnoux and Del Valle. After that, Firbas studies the discourses in colonial Peru promoting linguistic unification with the metropolis as a precondition to cultural and political unification; Narvaja de Arnoux explores the political implications of the writing of grammars in Argentina and Uruguay in the nineteenth century; Cifuentes discusses the political and cultural debates around the creation of the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua in 1875; Valdés traces the oscillation between nationalistic and panhispanic linguistic discourses in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Dominican Republic; Barrios focuses on roughly the same period and analyzes the official construction of non-Spanish-speaking groups in Uruguay as a contradiction to national unity; Toscano and García interpret the creation of the Instituto de Filología at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (1922) as a site of contention among discourses on language, science and nation; and Del Valle explores the ideological underpinnings of the events surrounding the meeting of Spanish language academies in Mexico in 1951.

A panoramic chapter authored by Del Valle and García introduces part 4. In this part of the volume, DuBord connects discourses on the use of Spanish and English in territorial Arizona to the social struggle between Spanish-speaking local elites and the new Anglo establishment; Fernández-Gibert analyzes similar coetaneous tensions in New Mexico; Martínez interprets the instrumentalization of Spanish as a language with public usefulness in Texas as an alternative to monoglossic Anglo discourses in the early 20th century; and Leeman traces the constructions of Latino-ness in the US Census in the form of ethnolinguistic labels and the use of Spanish as a demographic denominator.

Part 5 starts with an introductory chapter by Fernández and Del Valle, followed by a piece by Bürki on the debates about the use of Judeo-Spanish within Sephardic communities in the Balkans in the early twentieth century. Castillo Rodríguez studies the cultural and political motivations for the official efforts to expand the use of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea. The volume comes to a close with a chapter by Fernández on the changing metalinguistic constructions of Spanish in twentieth-century Philippines.

*A Political History* is, simply put, a remarkable collection of historical studies on language discourses in the Spanish-speaking world. Every piece of this project is a carefully researched, solidly argued piece of scholarship. Some of the chapters offer a summarized and useful approach to their authors' previous research (e.g., Wright's chapter on Romance vs. Latin and Fernández-Gibert's on language discourses in territorial New Mexico), while others shed light on other less researched aspects of the sociopolitical history of Spanish (e.g., Villa's paper on the opposition between state policies and the alternative standardizing proposals in mid-nineteenth-century Spain or Castillo Rodríguez's piece on Equatorial Guinea). Yet others take innovative approaches to well-known texts, institutions and cultural processes (e.g., Martínez's observations on Golden Age constructions of language, nation and empire in Spain or Toscano y García's examination of the political motivations for the creation of the Instituto de Filología). Some readers might miss chapters covering certain geographical areas (for instance, Central America) or individual countries (such as Chile, Cuba, Venezuela, etc.), but this is hardly a flaw given that this volume does not have a comprehensive aim (and quite logically so). Much on the contrary, this collection is the starting point for questions about the many interfaces between language, power and culture that may in turn be fruitfully asked about areas and periods not specifically addressed by these studies. Besides its undeniable scholarly value, an additional remarkable aspect of this volume is its editorial cohesiveness. This is obviously not just a handful of studies sharing a few vague thematic commonalities and thrown together into a single volume. Much on the contrary, the editor has done a phenomenal job in contextualizing the topic of the book theoretically and historically, and, drawing from his extensive research experience in the area, has succeeded in producing a solidly structured, exquisitely edited collection that exemplifies an ideal edited

volume. This project is, in short, an outstanding contribution to the study of the metalinguistic history of Spanish, which will be much welcomed by linguists, social anthropologists, and students of the cultural history of the Spanish-speaking world.

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**García, Ofelia, and Li Wei.** *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Pp. 165. ISBN 978-1-137-38575-8.

In Ofelia García and Li Wei's study *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, the authors carefully consider the process of translanguaging—a method in which language learners switch from first to second languages—and the benefits it can bring to current practices of bilingualism and bilingual education. By pointing out that bilingualism, multilingualism, and plurilingualism have traditionally been conceptualized as two or more autonomous language systems, the authors suggest that a post-structuralist approach to language, one that views language as fluid and dynamic rather than static, sets the groundwork for a translanguaging approach that can transform the concept of bilingualism. While current bilingual education systems privilege a bifurcated paradigm, García and Li Wei convincingly argue that translanguaging in primary and secondary classrooms is a successful multimodal approach for language learners to weave their home language into their new language, as opposed to polarizing the two. This book appeals to a wide audience of both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as to educators and administrators alike.

The book is structured into two parts: part I (chapters 1–2) defines the concept, establishes the authors' positionalities on translanguaging, and discusses how translanguaging affects current bilingual paradigms. Part II (chapters 3–7) explores how translanguaging works as a pedagogical practice and focuses on what it can offer bilingual education.

Chapter 1, "Language, Language and Bilingualism," reviews the emergence of languaging among scholars and how it has been used in sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic literature, and also how traditional concepts of bilingualism have historically been studied from a monolingual perspective. By pointing out the limitations of fixed notions of language acquisition, this chapter is most significant in arguing for a more complex and fluid model of bilingualism.

The development of translanguaging as a theory is explained in chapter 2, "The Translanguaging Turn and Its Impact." The term "translanguaging" derives from Colin Baker's translation of the Welsh term *trawsieithu* that originally referred to the pedagogical practice of students writing in one language and then reading in another, and serves as the basis for what García and Li Wei also define as the model of languaging that "creates a social space that goes beyond linguistic structures" (39). In other words, the process of translanguaging is more attuned to the cultural hybridity contingent with our increasing globalization, and actively works to destabilize language hierarchies (69).

It is in chapter 3, "Language, Bilingualism and Education," that the authors begin to turn their attention to education, and examine how current bilingual and dual immersion models work to separate languages. They admit to the very real challenge of persuading educational authorities to accept translanguaging as a legitimate asset for students. As is the case, most resistance concerns assessment and standardized testing. García and Li Wei astutely point out that state schools continue to insist on monolingual "academic standard" practices (47). Instead of standardized tests that are only offered in English in the United States, the authors argue for a performance and formative based Dynamic Assessment that would measure creativity and criticality.

A more detailed case for why bilingualism in education needs to shift to translanguaging in education is provided in chapter 4, and it is finally in chapter 5 "Translanguaging to Learn" and in chapter 6 "Translanguaging to Teach" where the authors turn their focus on the key